



2010 NWFA **WOOD FLOOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

# Prizes on the Potomac

**T**URN THE PAGE to read profiles of the winners of the prestigious NWFA Wood Floor of the Year contest. Winners were chosen online before March's NWFA Convention in Washington, D.C., and the Members' Choice winner was also voted on by members at the show. For information on entering next year's contest, go to [www.nwfa.org](http://www.nwfa.org).



**BEST RESTORATION, MEMBERS' CHOICE** | UNIVERSAL FLOORS INC. (WASHINGTON, D.C.)

## Emblematic Embassy

**U**NIVERSAL FLOORS HAS become a power to be reckoned with in the Best Restoration category of the Wood Floor of the Year contest, having won the award four times now since the category was introduced in 2005. While company President Sprigg Lynn striding across the stage to collect trophies has become a familiar sight—the company's total count now stands at 11—company founder South Lynn Sr., Sprigg's father, who will turn 83 this year, had never even been to an NWFA convention until this year, when it came to his hometown. For the first time he did the honors of receiving the trophies; this floor won both Best Restoration and the highly sought-after Members' Choice.

This year's winning floor is emblematic of the type of work on which South Lynn Sr. built his company in the heart of Washington, D.C. The job encompassed between 11,000 and 12,000 square feet of wood flooring in the Austrian embassy; the Universal crew had 12 days to resand, repair and refinish the floor, all while the embassy stayed open. The crew ended up spending even more intense time on the job than they expected, as a freak blizzard kept them stranded at the embassy for two days straight (fortunately, with a stocked embassy kitchen). Snow and all, the job was completed within the time constraints and up to the standards of the demanding Austrians, the NWFA members and the Universal Floors founder.—K.M.W.

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**BEST CNC/LASER CUT | CZAR FLOORS (NEWTOWN, PA.)****Roman Recreation**

**F**EW CIVILIZATIONS CONTINUE to echo throughout history like ancient Rome. Its military tactics are still studied, its architecture still mimicked and its décor still sought.

It's fitting, then, that Newtown, Pa.-based Czar Floors—"Czar" being a Slavic derivative of the Latin "Caesar"—was asked to design and install this 280-square-foot parquet floor in a New York private residence. The homeowners are a well-traveled pair, and they presented Czar Floors with ideas from Roman ruins they viewed in Italy and France.

"The homeowners had very exquisite taste," says Val Platonov, president at Czar Floors. "Sometimes, the customer just gives you a free ride, but it's much more interesting to work with someone who has done their homework. In that respect, you always come out with something beautiful and unique."

Platonov says after his clients settled on this design, picking it from a collection of rough drawings his designers drafted, the glue-down project progressed smoothly. A Greek key design of American walnut and wenge surrounds an American walnut field comprising an overlapping square design. The center medallion—made of wenge, American walnut, white oak and maple—contains another Greek key border, and within that is a face reminiscent of Medusa, the mythological gorgon whose gaze turns onlookers to stone.

True to Platonov's statement, this floor turned out beautiful and unique, which is especially rewarding given his clients' exquisite taste.

"People who have that knowledge and have done their homework know what is possible," he says, "so it's a challenge to meet that—they want a perfect product. It was very challenging, but, yes, it was very rewarding, too."—D.D.

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**BEST COMMERCIAL | SCHMIDT CUSTOM FLOORS INC. (WAUKESHA, WIS.)****Project Honor**

**W**HEN YOU'RE ASKED to install a floor in the corporate headquarters of a global consumer products corporation, you will have to put all your skills to the test.

That's exactly what Waukesha, Wis.-based Schmidt Custom Floors did when installing this 1,280-square-foot end-block floor in SC Johnson's headquarters in Racine, Wis. The floor is located in Fortaleza Hall, a building that honors the company's third-generation leader H.F. Johnson Jr., who in 1935 piloted a twin-engine amphibious aircraft from Racine to Brazil to secure a sustainable source of wax for his company's products. Those involved in the hall's construction aptly referred to their undertaking as "Project Honor."

Plans called for the wood flooring to be surrounded by terrazzo, but, of course, the end-block pieces couldn't be routed into the terrazzo like a medallion in a wood floor. So company president Tim Schmidt and crew, along with flooring provider John Yarema, got creative. After testing several mock-ups, they decided to install a replica CNC-cut plywood mold where the Americas design would later be installed, around which terrazzo would be poured.

After the terrazzo set, Schmidt's workers removed the mold and installed the 3-inch-square engineered end-block pieces. To convey the look of a topographical map, walnut, cherry, maple and hornbeam were used for their varying colors. The laser-cut pieces were delivered in pre-assembled sections, so Schmidt says it was like putting together a giant puzzle.

Yet, it's certainly not puzzling why this floor was labeled a Wood Floor of the Year.—D.D.

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**BEST EXTREME MAKEOVER |** INEX FLOORS INC. (RICHBORO, PA.)

## Dragon's Lair

**T**HE OWNERS OF this residence near New York's Central Park wanted a dragon medallion added to their existing ash and white oak floor. After all, Oriental dragons are auspicious creatures; their breath is divine energy, and they're associated with abundance and blessing. What's more, the dragon would complement their existing Eastern-influenced décor.

They "absolutely insisted" the inlay's border be the dragon's shape, says Stan Sidorov, president at Inex Floors Inc.; this way it could flow with the rest of the room, he says. While installing a medallion is straightforward enough, installing a free-flowing medallion like this is a bit more of a challenge, so Sidorov agreed to work with the homeowners under the condition that his company, which specializes in crafting medallions, be the one that also installed the piece.

Before getting to work, however, Sidorov made sure job site (and post-work) conditions were correct, so he had the owners purchase a portable humidifier to rectify relative humidity that was near 20 percent the first time he entered the home. Luckily, the homeowners were receptive to both the concept of household moisture regulation and its added cost. After the medallion was installed—a process that involved a router, chisel and Dremel—Sidorov's

crew screened the entire floor and then applied a semi-gloss water-based finish.

The labor for this job was finished in just three days, however—with proper maintenance, of course—its blessings should last a lifetime.—D.D.

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**BEST LIMITED SPECIES |** ARCHETYPAL IMAGINARY REMODELING CORP. (LITTLE NECK, N.Y.)

## A Home Saved by Flooring

**T**HE OWNER OF this private residence in Queens realized he made a mistake in not hiring an interior designer to help renovate his home—somehow, his spiral staircase was plopped directly in the entryway, an odd focal point at any rate. But he saw an opportunity to save the space when it came time for his wood floors to be installed, and for that job he contacted Avedis Duvenjian, president of Archetypal Imaginary Remodeling Corp.

"We took a negative and turned it to a positive," Duvenjian says. For design duties, Duvenjian usually enlists the talents of Vartan Arutyunian, whom Duvenjian describes as an authentic and inspired artist, and by the looks of this floor, the description is spot-on.

The floor's hallmark is the wenge and aluminum ribbon, which was CNC-cut. After installing the solid ¾-inch-thick, multi-directional hand-cut African mahogany field, the ribbon path was routed ¼-inch deep and the wenge and aluminum installed. Duvenjian strove to give the floor a natural appearance, so his crew hand-scraped the wood and applied a vegetable-oil-based finish.

Duvenjian believes a flooring company must set itself apart to succeed. "You've got to distinguish yourself. You have to do something that not everyone is willing to do," he says. With this floor, Duvenjian has proved his case.—D.D.



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## BEST MANUFACTURER FACTORY-FINISHED

JOHN YAREMA (OAKLAND, MICH.)

### Great Expectations

**I**'M TRYING TO slow it down a little bit and only do the really custom work," says perennial Wood Floor of the Year winner John Yarema. To that end, he no longer employs multiple local crews but instead is focusing on design work around the world, hiring people locally or flying people in to do the actual installation. This job, however, was one that kept him close to home. Part of an extensive addition of a home in an exclusive gated community in a Detroit suburb, the wood border was to be retrofitted into the black granite floor. The plan called for macassar ebony with lines of wenge around the edge, and the floor was to have its final sanding and finishing on site. The first complication came when the tile workers cutting the area for the border in the existing floor decided to flatten one side to avoid hitting a grout line. That threw off the laser-cut wood flooring, which then had to be painstakingly adjusted on-site.

Once that was complete, the sanding and finishing wasn't up to expectation, Yarema says. "It was an '8' the first time around and we needed a '10,'" he says, noting that the client expected perfection. So, he made the decision to recreate the entire floor using laser-cut aluminum instead of wenge as the "hold lines" and to sand and finish the wood floor back at the shop. Armed with accurate templates the second time around and the prefinished floor, the next installation proved to be the winner, both for the client and (for Yarema's ninth time), the Wood Floor of the Year contest.—K.M.W.

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Adhesive: **BOSTIK INC.** | Distributor: **Professional Hardwoods** | Finish: **Vermeister America Inc.** | Wood Flooring/Border: **Yarema Marquetry**

## BEST RECLAIMED | DM HARDWOOD DESIGNS (FARMINGTON, N.M.)

### Home Sweet Home

**S**O FAR, DAVE MARZALEK'S NEW Mexico home has been good luck for him. For the second year in a row, a floor from that house has continued his Wood Floor of the Year legacy. Last year, it was his entryway, with an elaborate design of broken boards, end-grain logs and a hand-cut three-dimensional wildlife inlay. This year, it's Marzalek's own bedroom that brought home the trophy.

This year's floor was the result of a wood flooring school Marzalek hosted in his own home. He gives all the credit for the winning floor to the six students: Tracy Tribadeau, Trevor Larsen, Randy Harris, Brett Miller, Reed Maddray and Curt Sandberg, as well as his friend Keith Wells and son Dustin, who also worked on the floor. "I drew the design up a year ago," Marzalek says. "Basically it's my signature broken board thing in Rocky Mountain style, but I wanted to add a rug in front of my bed." Implementing the design, however, was left to the students, who created and dry-laid the entire floor, then glued it down in sections.

For five days, they worked all day till the wee hours of the morning. "They called it the Extreme DM Hardwood Designs Boot Camp," Marzalek says. No one minded the crazy hours, he says, especially not him. "I was very enthusiastic because I was sharing ... At this stage in my career that's becoming more rewarding." So rewarding, in fact, that Marzalek is planning another school at his home for next November, when students will tackle installation of a solid wood floor below-grade in Marzalek's basement office.—K.M.W.

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**BEST RESIDENTIAL | JOHN ALFORD FLOOR COVERING INC. (MILAN, IND.)**

## Starting Strong

**I**N SOME WAYS, John Alford may seem an unlikely candidate to win a Wood Floor of the Year award with a high-end residential wood floor. After all, he's a second-generation carpeting installer. And although he started working with prefinished wood flooring about 12 years ago, it was only three years ago that he began installing unfinished wood flooring, and just in the last year that he learned how to sand floors.

That doesn't sound like a fast track to winning a Wood Floor of the Year award, but Alford had some expert help along the way. He started attending the NWFA technical schools and developed relationships with instructors, in particular NWFA Director of Technical Education Steve Seabaugh, who encouraged him to develop his wood flooring skills. "Steve kept pushing me to start sanding ... Now I'm certified for Installation and Sand & Finish," Alford says.

Those skills were essential on this job, which included 3,300 square feet of wood flooring. The client had planned on installing a low-end prefinished product, but once Alford saw the 7,000-square-foot home, he talked the client into a more appropriate sand-and-finish floor, with 6-inch plank in most of the house and parquet in the family room and dining room. Just the edges of the parquet were hand-scraped before being glued down, and then the walnut and white oak flooring was stained and finished on-site with an oil-modified finish. While the floor impressed the members who voted, winning an award so fast hasn't gotten to Alford's head. "I was fairly surprised that I won," Alford says. "I always think I can do better."—K.M.W.

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## Honorable Mentions



**BEST CNC/LASER CUT**

YANTARNAYA PRYAD-PARQUET (KHIMKI, RUSSIA)

Maple, walnut, wenge and teak were included in this floor coated with waterborne finish.

**BEST CNC/LASER CUT**

JOHN YAREMA (OAKLAND, MICH.)

Quartersawn walnut was glued down in a bent herringbone pattern, bordered on each side by stone, and coated with penetrating oil.

